

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 10/30/2002

To: Criminal Investigative

Attn: SSA [redacted]
Major Theft and Transportation Unit

From: Minneapolis
Squad 4/Duluth RA
Contact: SA [redacted]

Approved By: [redacted]

Drafted By: [redacted]

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Case ID #: 149A-MP-62632 (Pending) -17

Title: CHANGED
SENATOR PAUL WELLSTONE (DECEASED);
SHELLA WELLSTONE (DECEASED);
MARCIA WELLSTONE MARKUSON (DECEASED);
MARY McEVOY (DECEASED);
THOMAS LAPIC (DECEASED);
WILL McLAUGHLIN (DECEASED);
RICHARD CONRY (DECEASED);
MICHAEL GUESS (DECEASED);
CRASH OF BEECH KING A100 at EVELETH, MN;
10/25/2002
DESTRUCTION OF AIRCRAFT

Synopsis: Initial response and preliminary investigation conducted.

Previous Title: Title marked "Changed" to reflect identities of victims onboard the Beech King A100 which crashed near the Virginia-Eveleth, Minnesota airport on 10/25/2002. Title previously carried as "UNSUB; Senator Paul Wellstone - victim; Destruction of Aircraft."

Details: On Friday, October 25, 2002, at approximately 10:21 a.m., a Beech King A100 flying from Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN, carrying six passengers and two pilots crashed on approach to the Virginia-Eveleth, Minnesota, airport. All on board the aircraft perished. They were: Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN); his wife Sheila Wellstone; their daughter Marcia Wellstone Markuson; staff member Mary McEvoy; staff member Will McLaughlin; staff member Thomas Lopic; the pilot Captain Richard Conry; and co-pilot Michael Guess. Senator Wellstone was travelling to Virginia, Minnesota to attend the funeral of the father of Thomas Rukavina, a Minnesota State Representative and family friend.

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The impact of the crash and the resulting fire destroyed the aircraft. The crash site was located in a densely wooded area approximately 1/2 mile from Bodas Road in Fayal Township, and access to the site was difficult due to the woods and swampy terrain. The initial response was conducted by the Fayal Township Fire and Rescue Squad (FTF&R) and the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office (SLCSO). An on-scene command post was established by the SLCSO and traffic was restricted by the Minnesota State Patrol (MSP). An EOC (off-site operations center) was later established at the Fayal Town Hall.

The two agents of the Duluth Resident Agency immediately responded to the crash site to assist local authorities, who had secured the scene after ascertaining there were no survivors, and to await the arrival of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) team. Agents of the Bemidji RA arrived as well as the SAC and a Supervisor from the Minneapolis Office, the MP Media Coordinator, and eight members of the MP Evidence Response Team.

On Friday night, 10/25/2002, the NTSB held an initial operational meeting at the EOC at the Fayal Town Hall to outline investigative strategy. Attendees included the NTSB team, SLCSO, the MSP, FF&R, MN Dept of Public Safety, the United States Capitol Police, and the FBI. [redacted] Acting Head of the NTSB, was introduced as the official spokesperson for any media contact. [redacted] was identified as the Investigator-in-Charge of this investigation. The SAC of the Minneapolis Office offered the assistance of the FBI. The SLCSO and MSP provided overnight and continuous security for the crash site and traffic perimeter.

Beginning on Saturday morning, 10/26/2002, and continuing through the evening of 10/27/2002, the ERT assisted the NTSB in the search of the crash site and the recovery of human remains and personal property belonging to the victims. All remains and personal property were turned over to the medical examiner, Dr. [redacted], University Medical Center Mesabi, Hibbing, Minnesota. All eight individuals on board the aircraft were positively identified through dental records.

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The FAA also arrived on 10/26/2002, well as representatives from the pertinent airplane parts manufacturers. Progress meetings were held by the NTSB at the Fayal Town Hall each evening through October 29, 2002. It was explained that this phase of the investigation was the data gathering stage, and that the analysis of the data would continue for some time. The

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FBI attended progress meetings each evening 10/25/02 - 10/28/02, and maintained telephone contact with the NTSB thereafter.

Initial information obtained from NTSB investigators revealed that they were looking at the weather conditions, equipment on the ground and the aircraft, communications between the pilot(s) and air traffic controllers, and examination of the wreckage. It was determined that there was no cockpit voice recorder contained on the aircraft, and none was required. It appeared that the pilot(s) had elected not to travel after a 7:15 am weather information request, but did file a flight plan after an 8:15 weather information request. The weather conditions included light snow and mist, a temperature hovering around the freezing mark, some icing and fog at varying altitudes. The plane left Minneapolis St. Paul at approximately 9:37 am. Near the Virginia-Eveleth Airport the plane was cleared for approach. There was no indication of anything wrong. The pilot did not indicate distress in his last transmission with the controller at 10:18 am. Radar data indicated that upon approach to the airport the aircraft made an unusual sharp left turn to the south, with a continuous air speed decrease. The last radar data fix was at 10:21 a.m. Witnesses reported hearing a low-flying aircraft, silence, and then an explosive sound. Survey of trees at the wreckage site indicated that the plane fell at an average 25 degree angle. Initial inspection of the wreckage revealed no sign of pre-crash foreign object damage and no major pre-crash damage to the engines. The NTSB could not initially determine why the plane made the left turn, and there was no definitive cause of the accident after this initial phase of the investigation.

UACB, the FBI will continue to assist the FAA and NTSB with any requests they may have and will notify FBIHQ of significant developments.

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